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ABSTRACT

Principal induction is the process by which new school principals make the transition from theoretical to operational leadership. Many approaches to induction have been tried, ranging from simply handing over the building keys to comprehensive career development programs. To exemplify ongoing research and development in educational administration seeking to fill the gap between the idealized abstraction characteristic of principal academic preparation and the demanding reality confronted during their first years on the job, five studies are discussed in this document. First, Ron Hickey outlines the results of his survey of 34 new Kentucky principals and recommends, based on the compiled data, additional orientation in time management, communication with staff, working with parents, budgeting, and curricular instruction. Second, based on his recently completed study in the Midwest, John C. Daresh delineates the major problems confronting new principals and offers some promising recommendations. Third, Joseph W. Licata describes how a Louisiana State University project has organized a collaborative inservice training effort for 15 new principals. Fourth, Mark E. Anderson gives a comprehensive guide to the formation of strategies for successful principal induction. And fifth, Howard Sosne provides from personal experience a practical guide of "dos and don'ts" for new principals. (KM)

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Inducting Principals

Carl Andrews

Principal induction is the process by which new school principals make the transition from theoretical leadership to operational leadership. Many of today's new principals abruptly find that the complexity of the job was never conveyed to them during their preservice training. Suddenly they face the myth that leaders are supposed to know all the answers—at a time when they really need help in the socialization process and in learning new technical routines.

Educators and trainers of educators are still groping with the perplexities of identifying effective training methods for new principals. Many approaches have been tried, ranging from simply handing over the keys to the building to comprehensive, step-by-step career development programs. Unfortunately, few of today's new principals have received significant on-the-job training before taking on the role, and their inservice training programs are rarely very comprehensive. Most "rookies" could benefit greatly from a properly instituted induction program.

The strategy of principal induction must necessarily vary with the size and resources of the school district. Availability of state programs will vary also. There do seem to be, however, certain issues and difficulties that most new principals inevitably encounter. Five recent reports represent attempts to identify those issues and difficulties, and to discern effective approaches to successfully dealing with them through inservice training.

In the first study, Ron Hickey has compiled data from a survey of thirty-four new Kentucky principals. His discussion of the survey results discloses a general yet vivid view of their most common concerns and issues.

In the second report, John C. Daresh goes further into schematizing new principals' needs, discussing findings from his own interview-based study in the Midwest. He uncovers difficulties commonly involved in the induction process and distills from this group three basic areas in which new principals would benefit from more comprehensive preservice and inservice preparation.

The third and fourth selections are both descriptions of presently functioning inservice training projects, elaborating their missions and schemas. The former, *Clinical Induction*, is a description of an innovative and collaborative training program in Louisiana.

The fourth study, *Inducting Principals*, examines strategies developed by school districts of various sizes in Oregon. It also reviews successes reported by the Leadership for Excellence and the Peer-Assisted Leadership programs operating through the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory and the Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development, respectively.

In the final selection, Howard Sosne provides from personal experience a very practical guide of dos and don'ts for new principals. He maintains an emphasis throughout on interpersonal relations with faculty and staff, listing examples of how a principal can pave the way toward team spirit and school excellence.

In general these five studies illustrate the kind of ongoing research and development in educational administration that is seeking to fill the gap between the idealized abstractions so characteristic of the academic preparation of principals and the immensely demanding reality that these principals confront during their first years on the job.

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1 **Hickey, Ron,** compiler. *A Statewide Program of Support for Beginning Administrators: The Kentucky Institute for Beginning Principals.* Charleston, West Virginia: Kentucky Association of School Administrators and Appalachia Educational Laboratory, November 1987. 88 pages. ED 296 454.

This telephone interview survey reveals the daily experiences of thirty-four first- and second-year principals, 60 percent of whom serve in elementary schools. It highlights those issues that, in the opinions of new principals, require the most intensive support from inservice training, mentoring, or networking.

The two most frequently mentioned problem areas were working with parents and managing time. The most needed type of assistance was said to be procedural help. A significant number of principals felt inadequately prepared for eight types of activities. In order of frequency of mention, they are managing classified personnel, extracurricular activities, budget and finance, managing time, working with parents, staff development, evaluation of staff, and building management.

Six types of inservice training/professional development were said to be occurring regularly among new principals: evaluation of staff, curriculum/instruction, staff development, communication skills, time management, and goal setting.

The interviewed principals recommended additional orientation in the areas of (in order of frequency) time management, communication with staff, work with parents, budget/finance, and curriculum/instruction.

2 **Daresh, John C.** "The Highest Hurdles for the First Year Principal." Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Washington, DC, April 1987. 27 pages. ED 280 136.

Daresh effectively delineates the major problems confronting new principals during initiation to their roles. He has recently completed a study in the Midwest consisting of indepth onsite interviews. He cites role clarification, isolation from peers, technical expertise, and socialization as being four major issues. Based on the experiences reported, Daresh exposes what would appear to be basic weaknesses in our present induction systems, particularly in regards to on-the-job training.

Daresh talks about the major problem of isolation from peers—the lack of feedback and interpersonal support. He decries the brevity of field-based activities that are part of the structured practicum of normal licencing procedures, particularly as regards the fact that they do not actually require the student to assume the principal's job for any appreciable length of time.

Some of the common technical problems he cites involve understanding the school district's coding systems, forms, and computer printouts; legal issues; and budgetary matters, all of which vary from district to district.

Daresh suggests some promising support systems that could be instituted for new principals and gives recommendations for school districts, state educational agencies, and universities. For role clarification, he particularly emphasizes the need for "real" internships, noting that future principals need long-term, full-time observation and, if possible, need to actually take on the role of administrator during necessary absences of the regular principal.

He endorses longer internship mandates by the states, and with regard to socialization, he recommends the use of a "noninvolved" mentor whom the principal could feel free to confide in. A retired principal, he notes, is often the best choice for this role.

For technical expertise, Daresh says that inservice seminars appear to be the best solution, pointing out that they could often be organized in collaboration with local business and industry leaders.

Noting that during college preparation there is rarely sufficient opportunity for deep reflection on the purpose of the skills and knowledge offered, Daresh suggests that a chance to step back and wonder "Why?" would significantly enhance preservice programs.

Daresh ends by cautioning that whatever programs are instituted, it is important to examine individual needs, interests, and concerns. Otherwise, he argues, programs become simply window dressing and are likely to fail.

About ERIC

The Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) is a national information system operated by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement. ERIC serves educators by disseminating research results and other resource information that can be used in developing more effective educational programs.

The ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management, one of several such units in the system, was established at the University of Oregon in 1966.

Prior to publication, this manuscript was submitted to the National Association of Elementary School Principals for critical review and determination of professional competence. This publication has met such standards.

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3 **Licata, Joseph W., and Ellett, Chad D.** "Toward a Clinical Induction System for School Principals." Paper presented at the annual meeting of the University Council for Educational Administration, Cincinnati, Ohio, October 1988. 21 pages.

This report describes how a Louisiana State University LEAD (LEAD = Leadership in Educational Administration Development) project has gone about organizing a collaborative effort for the inservice training of a group of fifteen new principals. The initial three-year funding for the project includes a matching grant from the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Educational Research and Improvement, and funds from the National LEAD organization.

The network includes faculty from four other universities and leaders from business and industry, local and state government, and educational and professional organizations. The network serves both as a technical support and training resource and as a facilitator for continuation of the project once the three-year term of current federal funding ends.

The project assists principals through clinical diagnosis of performance and conducting professional development seminars. It also offers individual mentorship in order to address principals' individual needs.

Assessment is multidimensional, including comparisons of principal and teacher perceptions both with each other and with the norm, a school survey that tests teacher morale and school climate, and a principal performance survey. All these diagnostic instruments were developed by Licata.

From the data produced, he has also designed a series of professional development seminars. One type of seminar, focused on problem-solving, is described. Principals record school meetings on audio or video tapes that are critiqued by participants in terms of the outcomes specified in the problem-solving objectives.

Principals have responded with positive support for the project, stating that both their own development and student achievement have been enhanced.

4 **Anderson, Mark E.** *Inducting Principals: How School Districts Help Beginners Succeed.* Eugene: Oregon School Study Council, University of Oregon, October 1988. OSSC Bulletin Series. 60 pages.

This is a comprehensive guide to the formulation of strategies for successful principal induction. In the first two chapters, Anderson gives an insightful view of the challenges and experiences of new principals. Then he describes several promising programs designed to help beginning principals respond to those challenges and experiences productively. He goes on to illustrate both strategies and operational programs developed for various sizes of Oregon school districts.

In examining two larger districts, he describes first of all the use of comprehensive preservice training programs, including seminars, internships, and assistant principalships, which serve as vehicles to prepare aspirants to the administrative role.

One district (11,600 students) gives inservice workshops and operates a mentor principal program to confront isolation. Another district (22,500) uses a networking system among principals as a supportive activity.

Two smaller districts (5,000 and 1,500) also have instituted mentor programs; one uses a retired principal. Rookie principals are reported to feel freer to ask questions when they have a mentor who is removed from the district. A very personalized orientation process is characteristic of these smaller districts.

The smaller districts are reported to also benefit greatly from the Peer-Assisted Leadership (PAL) and the Leadership for Excellence (LFE) programs. The PAL program, developed by the Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development, incorporates a pairing up of principals to "shadow" each other in their individual schools.

The Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory developed the LFE program, which has five content strands; participants choose one strand on which to concentrate their efforts during a year. The five strands are Vision Building, School Climate and Culture, Improvement of Instruction, Curriculum Implementation, and Monitoring Student Progress. Anderson says this menu represents a broad enough base of content so that principals can size up their own situations and acquire the training that best suits their needs.

In his conclusion, Anderson recommends that school districts institute preservice training programs and *full-time* internships, and assign aspiring teachers to various leadership roles. Moreover, he adds, districts should provide their new school leaders with orientations to the system's business, transportation, maintenance, public relations, personnel, curriculum, and perhaps other offices. Saying that experienced principals are probably the most valuable resource for orienting new principals, he calls for a mentor or "Buddy" system to help reduce the isolation that many principals experience.

5 **Sosne, Howard L.** "Advice to Rookies: Dos and Don'ts for Making That First Year Successful." *Principal* 62, 1 (September 1982): 14-17. EJ 267 044.

Sosne claims that team spirit is a prerequisite to effective leadership in bringing about change. Pointing out that "people mistakes" are usually the most damaging to principals, he lists a

series of examples of common breakdowns that can undermine the building of team spirit.

Sosne says that probably the most common pitfall among new principals is trying to bring about change too quickly. New principals are themselves symbols of change, and change is a phenomenon that tends to produce anxiety and resistance in people. It is thus crucial that new principals do not come across as threatening the teachers' sense of security and well-being, for doing so can raise the anxiety to crisis levels. A slow, steady course—anticipating, understanding, and allaying anxieties as one moves ahead—is the most reliable approach to pursue, says Sosne. If there is a direct challenge of authority, it is evidence that one is moving too fast, not anticipating all the possible consequences on all parties involved, or not involving the staff sufficiently in the decision-making process.

In evaluating teachers, Sosne recommends starting with some of the stronger teachers. The word will get out that your perceptions of their work are fair and accurate.

Also, he says, following a model of clinical supervision will help teachers understand your procedures, and thereby reduce anxiety. He suggests visiting classrooms frequently for nonevaluative purposes. For instance, doing demonstration teaching and taking small groups for instruction will show that you are a team member.

Trying to solve every problem is another common mistake of rookie principals, he says, noting that "principals are often more effective as counselors than as problem solvers. They should coach whenever possible, and be umpires only when it is really necessary." Another caution arises from the new principal's natural desire to establish rapport with the staff. Too often, Sosne says, the result is a tendency to foul up one's priorities, so that decision-making becomes overly teacher-centered rather than child-centered, an egregious professional error.

One ethical mistake that Sosne mentions is that of confiding information about one staff member to another, or sharing information only with "trusted" colleagues. This practice will seriously undermine morale and can devastate a staff.

Another ethical mistake is blaming an unpopular decision on one's boss. Not only will such buckpassing create staff doubts about the principal's fortitude but will inevitably get back to the boss. In taking responsibility for your decisions, Sosne says, you have the chance to show both your courage and your fallibility, making you appear more human. Others will then be more willing to approach you in an honest way.

Sosne ends with a series of positive steps new principals can take in affirming their leadership role. He suggests setting up an advisory committee, with rotating membership to allow all who wish an opportunity to participate; and he notes that having a clear mission statement and a timetable for changes will leave less reason for disappointment. He declares, "If, as a beginning principal, you do nothing else in your first year but create a sense of professional partnership with your staff, you will have set a foundation for instructional improvement in subsequent years."

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